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SUBJECT: GREECE: THESSALONIKI TRADE FAIR DEMONSTRATIONS WELL MANAGED
BY POLICE

The following text was initially sent on 09 September, but appears to have failed to transmit properly (most likely due to operator error on the part of the new CG). We are repeating transmission and apologize for any inconvenience caused by the reporting delay.

1. (SBU) Details on demonstrations occurring around the opening of the 74th annual Thessaloniki International Trade Fair, historically known for anti-government mass protests, follow below. In general, the Fair was considered one of the most peaceful in recent memory, with violent demonstrations kept to a minimum and well controlled by approximately 2,500 national police deployed preventatively around the city. The Consulate building received expanded police coverage during protest periods. No incidents took place in front of the Consulate or other U.S. interests around the city.

2. (SBU) On 05 September at 19:00 approximately 500 uniformed policemen, firefighters and coast guard officers gathered in front of the White Tower in downtown Thessaloniki and marched peacefully to the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace shouting slogans against GoG economic policy.

3. (SBU) On 06 September at 20:00, three groups of approximately 8,000 protesters each gathered at Aristotle Square, Syntrivaniou Square, and the Arch of Galerius (Kamara) in downtown Thessaloniki. The protestors included members of the General Confederation of Workers (GSEE), the Confederation of Public Servants (ADEDY), Labor Unions (PAME), Farmers (PASY), several other left wing groups and some anarchists. The demonstrators marched from those three locations to converge at the YMCA square across the street from the south entrance of the Thessaloniki International Trade Fair and the I. Vellidis convention center, where PM Karamanlis was officially opening the Trade Fair with his annual state-of-the-economy address. The event was attended by senior GoG officials and diplomats from Thessaloniki and Athens, including the DCM and Consul General. The protestors were blocked at the YMCA square by police and were not permitted to approach the Vellidis center. They remained in the square for approximately two hours, shouting slogans protesting GoG economic policy and left peacefully, passing in front of the Consulate without incident. The DCM and all U.S. Mission employees departed the Convention Center safely after the speech.

4. (SBU) Separately, on 06 September a group of anarchists marching in the city center several blocks from the Consulate hurled stones and Molotov cocktails at the police guard booth outside the Turkish Consulate and at several nearby bank branches. Police responded quickly and effectively, using tear gas, and arresting 25 suspects for participation in the disturbances. Five ATMs, a Millennium bank branch, and an Agricultural bank branch suffered significant material damage due to fires caused by the Molotov cocktails.

15. (SBU) This was the third consecutive year that police received advance authorization from the district attorney during the duration of the Fair to intervene and to pursue perpetrators of violent acts onto university campuses, thereby waiving normal "asylum" law prohibitions restricting police access to universities. No Fair-related incidents required police to test this authorization by entering a campus in hot pursuit, however police did successfully block anarchists from entering university areas during the demonstrations.

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